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ORIGINAL

The Aesthetics of the Grotesque. An Arts Project Inspired by the Reading of Reality

La Estética de lo Grotesco. Proyecto de Artes Inspirado en la Lectura de la Realidad

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ABSTRACT

The present work corresponds to the elaboration of an art project inspired by the reading of reality, carried out by second semester students of the Bachelor's Degree in Teaching and Learning of Mathematics and the Bachelor's Degree in Teaching and Learning of Spanish with the purpose of familiarizing them with the recent methodologies and paradigms of the New Mexican School, while reflecting on their own teaching knowledge. The approach of the project was carried out through a sociocritical paradigm with the participatory action research method and qualitative methodology, working with the total population of students, without the need for a sample space, resulting in a partial research report of a descriptive, non-statistical nature. Regarding the evaluation instruments, a formative evaluation was carried out, which allowed adjustments to be made throughout the project. Favorable results were found that express a positive attitude of the students towards project-based learning, a constant assimilation of the concepts and a subjectivation derived from the praxis, evoking in artistic expressions made by the students that reflect the social problems in the aesthetics of the grotesque in the most Bukowskian way.

Keywords: New Mexican School; project-based learning; participatory action research; teacher training; art and education.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo corresponde a la elaboración de un proyecto de arte inspirado en la lectura de la realidad, realizado por estudiantes de segundo semestre de las Licenciaturas en Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de las Matemáticas y la Licenciatura en Enseñanza y Aprendizaje del Español con el propósito de que se familiaricen con las recientes metodologías y paradigmas de la Nueva Escuela

Mexicana, al tiempo que reflexionan sobre su propio saber docente. El abordaje del proyecto se realizó mediante un paradigma sociocrítico con el método de investigación acción participativa y metodología cualitativa, trabajando con la población total de estudiantes, sin necesidad de un espacio muestral, por lo que resulta en un reporte parcial de investigación de carácter descriptivo no estadístico. En cuanto a los instrumentos de evaluación, se llevó a cabo una evaluación formativa que permitió hacer ajustes a lo largo de todo el proyecto. Se encontraron resultados favorables que expresan una actitud positiva de los estudiantes hacia el aprendizaje basado en proyecto, una asimilación constante de los conceptos y una subjetivación derivada de la praxis, evocando en expresiones artísticas realizadas por los estudiantes que reflejan las problemáticas sociales en la estética de lo grotesco al modo más bukowskiano.

Palabras clave: Nueva Escuela Mexicana; aprendizaje basado en proyectos; investigación acción participativa; formación docente; arte y educación.

INTRODUCTION

Education in Mexico is currently undergoing a paradigmatic restructuring in which the old does not turn the page, and the new does not emerge slowly, correlatively. This restructuring involves the inevitable reconfiguration of new plans and programs from preschool to university, leading to valid doubts and crises regarding the how and the why of these new socio-critical methodologies, interpretive approaches, and humanist-scientific paradigms. It is necessary for teachers to integrate these new ways of looking at teaching and to overcome stagnant approaches to transmit and accompany the knowledge and learning of new generations of students.

One of the constant questions is how to do a project that involves the reading of reality, and this is where the idea of the present project arises, trying to articulate in an organic way two fundamental components, such as the Arts and the reading of reality, to ensure that the students have the experience of feeling first-hand what it means to do a project that includes community problems in the areas that converge with the schools, seeing the relationship between the classroom, the school, and the community.

Background:

"A practical program of studies must be followed, in which the subjects and activities included are a true expression of the needs and aspirations of the rural community and the various phases of country life. The schools in each region must have their particular program."

The third principle of the active school and work (Larroyo, 1925).

In 1925, the Board of Federal Education Directors approved the teaching plan, which determined the pedagogical structure of rural schools in conjunction with the principles of active school and work (Larroyo, 1986, p. 405). This indicates that the intention for the school to be a center for community learning capable of taking root in real issues and problems comes from post-revolutionary times when the unbreakable link between school and community was evident.

The New Mexican School recovers this essential link from the reading of reality; however, to try to understand the truth of the other, one must begin by being aware of one's own, in the book without recipes for the teacher phase 6 (SEP, 2023b, p. 68) the analytical program is taken up again as a mechanism for the recognition of sub alternities and on page 24 of the same book it echoes class consciousness and historical memory, likewise, in the book sin recetas para el maestro fase 3 (SEP, 2023a, pp. 27-35) a qualitative diagnosis of needs in terms of critical thinking is proposed for students and teachers, and on page 33 of the same book the following question is addressed: Do you recognize the difference between sub alternities and hegemonies, between dominated and dominant, between oppressed and oppressors?

Subalternities, class consciousness, critical thinking, and historical memory are necessary to make a reading of reality in which the whole is not separated from its parts, and these parts by themselves – intertwined with each other– constitute the whole, following what is mentioned by Nussbaum's capabilities approach in which the person could never be asked to sacrifice themselves for the collective (2012, p. 38), it could be mistakenly argued that the interpretation of reality is a complex concept, I would say that the understanding of reality is a cultural process that is opposed to natural law.

As in any cultural process, the arts and aesthetic experiences are intertwined with an aesthetic approach encompassing both the grotesque and the beautiful. Echoing the words of the accursed poet Bukowski in his book *Women*, "As she paraded in front of me, she had a special way of looking into my eyes. She wasn't flirtatious or sexy; she was perfect."

The New Mexican School (NMS) proposes the sensitive exploration of the world as its central theme, the recreation of humanism to develop aesthetic experiences through the arts with the recognition of otherness, and the broadening of perception and critical judgment (SEP, 2022a, pp. 119-122).

In the Common Curriculum Framework for Upper Secondary Education, article 17 establishes that, to be a partner in the generation of reflective, autonomous citizens with a critical awareness of their environment and agency, the subjects of aesthetics are essential (SEP, 2022c, p. 25). Likewise, article 50 mentions that "artistic and cultural activities are the field of socio-emotional training that aims to provide tools that foster the development of critical, ethical, aesthetic, reflective and creative thinking in the community" (SEP 2022c p. 38) in the two previous articles, it is established that the arts and aesthetic experiences lead to critical awareness, which according to Freire is found "in the discussion, in inquiry, in refutative criticism, in concordant analysis, in the request for clarification" (2017, pp. 213-214).

Finally, the plans and programs of the 2022 plan for teacher training colleges (SEP, 2022b, p. 4) establish a focus on learning in interdependence with the community, which is reflected in the programs of the different degrees, especially in those with curricular flexibility, which involve the proposition of the programs through the reading of reality together with critical analysis, encompassing a dialectical link between being and existing, the latter represented in their graduate profile. Likewise, the artistic part is covered by the curricular orientations and the graduate profile (SEP, 2022b p. 3).

It is for the above reasons, dear reader, that this work links the reading of reality to the arts and aesthetic experiences to achieve a conjunction of knowledge and actions in which the other is recognized from a communal perspective, with the Nussbaumian imprint that lies in never asking the person to "buy into the cause."

Likewise, the present experience is rooted in a capabilities approach, so there is epistemic congruence with the new plans and programs. Addressing the investigative question: what is the best way to bring the student teacher closer to the process of reading reality? The student body should be able to represent the reading of reality in an artistic product.

METHODS

This document covers the second part of a project that began in the first semester and is currently in its second year (second semester). It was carried out with students of the degrees in Mathematics Teaching and Learning and Spanish Teaching and Learning. They have been followed up until the second semester—to date—and it is hoped that this will continue until they graduate. The information gathered corresponds to the two weeks of observation the students carried out in the second semester of their degree.

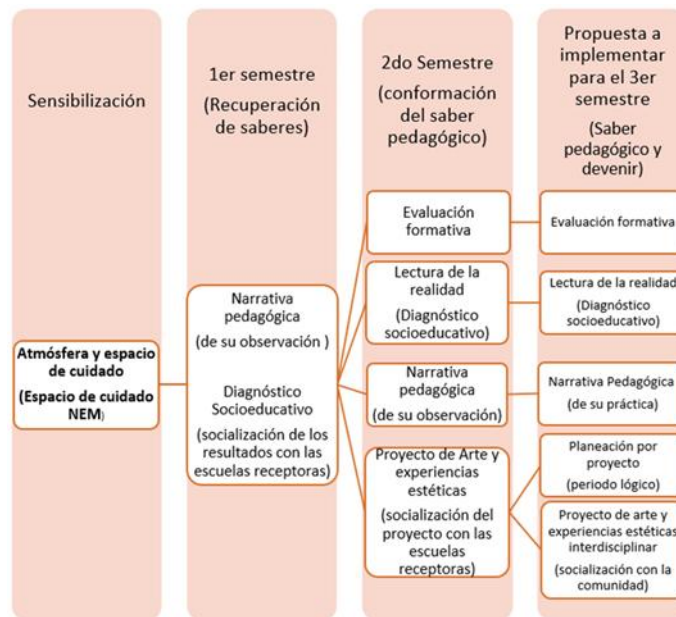
The paradigm on which this partial research report is based is sociocritical, of a descriptive, non-statistical nature, following a population of 79 student teachers of the two degrees. Using the participatory action research method within the following model: Perceiving or experiencing a problem;

Imagining the solution to the problem; Putting the imagined solution into practice; Evaluating the results of the actions taken; Modifying the practice in the light of the results (Whitehead, 1991, cited by Latorre 2003).

To gather information about the students' feelings, surveys were conducted throughout the project, and monitoring was carried out throughout the process using formative evaluation and pedagogical narrative following a logical time, as mentioned by Derrida in "Dar (el) Tiempo" (1995).

Finally, the following diagram presents a general outline of the project (Figure 1). In which the students themselves revealed each of the processes.

FIGURE 1. Diagram of the project covering the first and second semesters and the proposal to be implemented in the third semester.



RESULTS

Like any socio-critical project that starts from the community, moves forward with it, and returns to it, the present work began with the formation of Mathematical Knowledge Communities (MCC) and Spanish Knowledge Communities (SCC) made up of 5 or 7 members. To achieve this, the students were allowed to choose freely how these communities would be composed.

Summary of the first semester:

Although this paper deals with what happened during the second semester, it is necessary to summarize what happened during the first semester to establish a starting point from which a horizon of possibilities emerges.

During the first semester, the recovery of knowledge and activities was covered with questions such as: what made me want to be a teacher? What do I like about being a teacher? Why do I want to be a teacher? What does it mean to be a teacher? These questions were answered out loud and individually, with a drawing of their feelings. For the reflective part of their two weeks of observation, they wrote a narrative focusing on the triggering situation, what it takes away from them, and their reflection on what they experienced. They then shared it with their classmates, finding points in common and discrepancies and clarifying the difference between a narrative, story, field diary, and observation guide.

The students discussed the questions and the format necessary to understand the diagnosis of the classroom, school, and community. In the end, each group presented a report combining the results obtained by all the knowledge communities. It was then given to their classmates and the directors of the two schools where the two weeks of observation were carried out.

This aimed to create a caring space in which each student felt safe to express their opinion and engage in debate. It also established a perception of the other as a colleague with their knowledge and skills, but not as a tabula rasa devoid of substance and past.

-Second semester

a) Pedagogical narrative

Each student wrote their narrative, it was shared, and they reflected on their experiences, finding discrepancies and similarities, analyzing what they had written and what they had heard, first through a group dialogic dialogue to which fellow teachers were invited to listen to the narratives and in turn share their own experiences. Each narrative was personal and covered the three main points mentioned above:

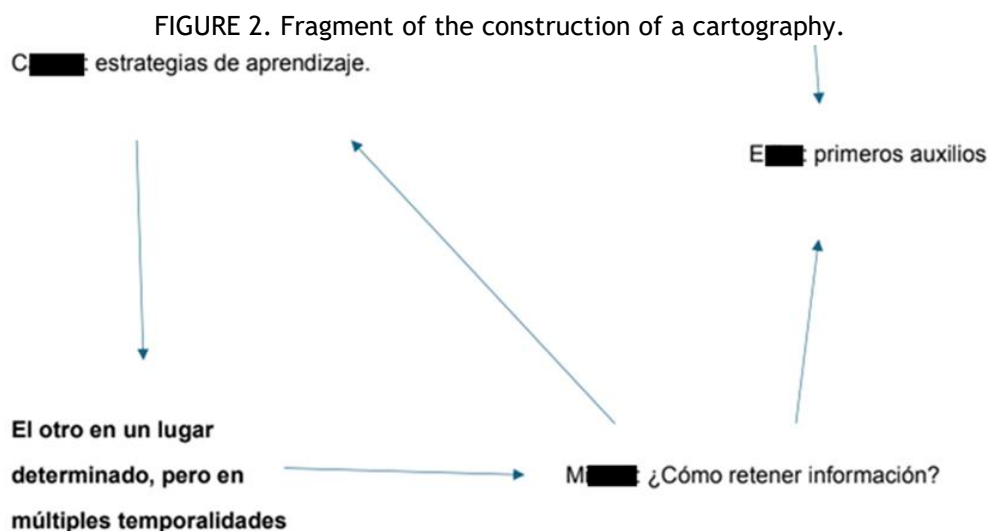
Narrative: "Mr. Questioner"

"This story begins on November 21, 2023. It was my week of practical training at the technical secondary school 26 Constituyentes. My instructions were to observe the class, take a few notes, and see if anything that happened would resonate with me... Everything seemed fine until I saw and heard some students chatting without the teacher noticing...; I left the classroom momentarily and saw my past in a situation similar to that of the chatting students. Come with me to relive this anecdote..."

For the analysis of what was experienced, lines of flight were constructed in which the student identified the agreement and discrepancy with the other:

"Colleague 1: The group control used by the work experience teacher reminded him of his teacher at secondary school. I remember having a teacher with group control, but I was scared of her. Colleague 2: She remembers everything she has done in her past, whether as a student, in her other degree, or what has led her here, and wonders, What can I do? I find myself intrigued by what I am doing and wondering where I am going.

The cartographies were made to anchor the events to a specific place, which contains memories (Figure 2). This idea was cemented in the final artistic product.



For the timelines, a general format was established together with the students following the precepts of temporality, cause and reflection (Figure 3).

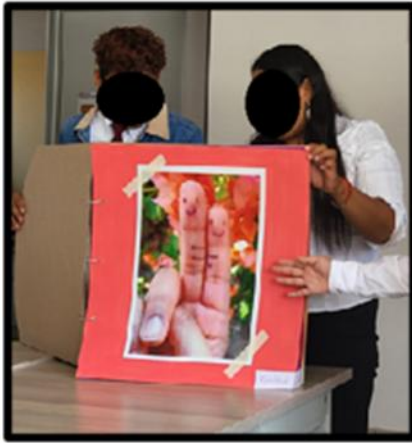
FIGURE 3. Example of the construction of the timeline.



As for the reading of reality, the students established what would be included in the classroom, school, and community diagnoses, and they concluded constructing the same diagnoses among the whole class to exchange and enrich the information. The diagnoses corresponding to the classroom were applied to the secondary school students and those corresponding to the school with the students and teaching staff. For the community diagnosis, the students were accompanied to use the diagnosis in businesses, inns, health centers, pharmacies, apothecaries, security institutions, and passers-by, being able to gather relevant information about the feelings of the community.

All of the above converge in reading reality and identifying social problems, resulting in an artistic product created by each CCM and CCE. The communities chose to represent their ideas and reflections in 8 different products: pantomime, verse, haiku, situationist drifts, photographic history, video documentary, play, and psychodrama (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4. Artistic representations of the interpretation of reality.



Historia fotográfica (acoso)



Marionetas (alimentación poco saludable)



Deriva situacionista (inseguridad, acoso)



Psicodrama (problemas socioemocionales)



Stand up (falta de vivienda) |



Pantomima (exclusión educativa)

The problems identified through the reading of reality were insecurity, lack of health services, bullying, unhealthy eating, socio-emotional problems, lack of housing, educational exclusion, lack of green areas, and scarcity of job opportunities. The students freely chose the artistic representation of the problem. The evaluation was established by creating rubrics – together with the students – in which they were asked: What do you consider essential to evaluate in your being as a teacher in training? The students followed their learning process with evaluation as an intrinsic part of it. I was responsible for making observations, corrections, resignifications, and redirections along the path already traveled and yet to be traveled.

The diagnoses applied to the students throughout the project process yielded the following relevant results (Table 1):

Table 1. Some relevant responses to the diagnoses applied to students throughout the project.

Question	Answers
What does the project mean to you?	<p>E1 -Happiness-</p> <p>E2 -It was something new, this project because there was a support from start to finish, where the glass ceilings, the context and the reality were present-</p>

	E3 -A means of expression to represent the problems that exist in that school, that people only see the problems inside the school, however the outside community is also important to understand a broader context and to know what the main problems are that must be overcome-
What does living and working with your colleagues in the knowledge community mean to you?	E1 -A bit tedious- E2 -My community means a lot to me because this semester I shared a place with them, as they didn't sit near me before, but it was a great surprise to get to know them academically and personally- E3 -They are a fundamental part of continuing to learn everything in this degree, working with them helped me to always be motivated-
What difficulties did you have to overcome in the learning task?	E1 - Not having asked my questions E2 - Understanding what a narrative is. Understanding the new Mexican school E3 - I think that in knowing myself in knowing what resonates in me, in traveling to the past to know what resonated in me with the present-
Do you feel that there is a climate of trust or an atmosphere of care in the classroom? If so, explain why?	E1 - To a certain extent there is, but there are people with whom I might not feel comfortable, but it doesn't mean that I stop doing something, since that is part of how I feel, and not necessarily how others feel. E2 - Yes, the atmosphere in our classroom is one of great respect and support, all the classmates greet each other and help each other to resolve doubts. Between all of us we need a little more organization but everyone is committed to learning.- E3 - No, mainly, from my point of view, I have noticed a lot of gossip from several of my colleagues. If you don't agree with them, they exclude you. That has made me take measures to be able to fit in, since most of the projects are team projects and if you don't agree with them, they don't take you into account at all, nor do they listen to your opinions because you think differently to them.-
Write a meaningful sentence about what you are learning at school..	E1 - Life is neither so bad nor so good, it just depends on the lens through which you view it. E2 - When you feel tired or want to throw in the towel, you don't have to do that, in reality it's that you are doing things well and overcoming your limits or comfort zones, in which way you are going to have a well-being in a certain period of time. E3 - The fear of feeling judged for feeling or thinking only limits us from reaching our maximum capacity-

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

What is the starting point for reading reality? In the opinion of the author of this compilation, the Reading of Reality (RoR) begins with knowing oneself. Glass ceilings, subalternities, class consciousness, and critical thinking are fundamental to becoming a teacher, together with a view of the world of Gramsci and the love for the whole and the one of the philosophy of Tlacaélel. RL is a way of seeing the

self through the recognition of the other; it recognizes the tiny deaths that govern you; it is grounding the insistent and recognizes the automaton origin of the institute; it is anger, misery, rage, love, camaraderie, and kindness. Within the reading of reality, we are immersed in the material conditions that root us: the rhizome is planted –Deleuzian– that is nothing without the earth. In turn, the rhizome nourishes the world.

In order to understand the LR, it is essential that students recognize through what lens they are going to observe reality. From there, they move away from observing the community and focus on observing how the community observes, feeling what the other feels, evoking Luhmann.

A fundamental part of the socio-critical paradigm is socialization. The results were socialized with the authorities of the secondary schools where the students carried out their weeks of observation, managing to extend this space of care to places outside the school and fostering a joyous and emotional welcome towards the observation and practice students, in which the one who gives commits to transmit with honesty and the one who receives cares.

What is the best way to introduce the student teacher to reading reality? First, as mentioned above, to create self-awareness, empathize, and finally, to express and reflect. The arts have always been a counterpoint to natural law. In the present project, it was possible to verify that the reflection of what has been experienced through artistic products is an instrument of reflection, of deconstruction that involves both being and existing or instead being existing as a conjunction of knowledge and actions that confront us – together with the students – with a chill of deconstruction in which the apoptosis of entrenched thoughts is promoted.

At this point, what about the grotesque? The grotesque is that which seductively attracts us towards apoptosis; it is apoptosis made true; it is the refuting critique of what survives; it is the ephemeral influence that directs us towards what we love and that we let live in us; it is the immortal phrase that the Accursed Poet mentions in his book *Women* "It was a dress with an open skirt and an exposed navel. As it paraded in front of me, it had a special way of looking me in the eye. It wasn't flirtatious or sexy; it was perfect."

As for the logical time frame for the project, it is impossible to take a 'project per semester.' Instead, it should be seen from a more distant perspective. The project should be glimpsed as this self-reflective process that lasts for as long as is considered logical, in which the students go through a subjectivization, firstly, as people who are accessing teacher training, not as tabula rasa lacking in the past, but as thinking and feeling subjects who start from their own material and ideal reality; secondly, as people who are in initial contact with students in front of a group and begin to establish their pedagogical knowledge; and thirdly, as agents of social change with the capacity to carry out a project whose central theme arises from a tremor that resonates within themselves.

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